

Bradford, Worsted. Drp 80m24

A Morning in a Bradford Worsted Factory.

Bradford, the "Metropolis of Worsted," abuts on the coal-field which stretches from Leeds to Nottingham, & many labourers are employed in the coal-pits, in extensive iron-works, & in the numerous quarries which surround the town; <sup>but</sup> still, the 28,000, or so, operatives who ~~should be engaged~~ in the 140 Worsted Factories of the Borough form the main body of the working population. These are, chiefly, wool-sorters, & the operatives, women & girls for the most part, who attend to the combing, carding, drawing, roving, spinning & weaving machines; besides packers, overlookers & clerks.

Before we investigate the nature of these several callings, let us consider upon what qualities in the wool itself its value to the manufacturer depends. Wool is a sort of hair, but distinguished from hair strictly so called by being <sup>always</sup> more or less wavy or curly; & also by the fact that each wavy fibre has jagged edges, being encased in armour of microscopic Scales, the points of which protrude not more than the two- or three-thousandth part of an inch, but are yet capable of catching in one another. The spiral nature of the fibres causes them to retain the twist the yarn receives in the spinning.

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Cragghis village, with <sup>much</sup> one well-stocked general  
shop, where the villagers, from neighbouring hamlets,  
Though its situation is perfect, some of its out-lying  
houses are delightfully placed on a brow overlooking  
the valley. Grassington itself is not attractive; it  
is an overgrown village consisting of a long, straight  
main street, with so many houses that there is little  
space for gardens. At the present time, the aspect  
of the place is desolate enough; the Grassington Lead  
Mineries have been closed within the past year,

and, as a consequence, the population of this  
<sup>neighbourhood</sup> ~~district~~ is declining fast. These mines, the  
property of the Duke of Devonshire, lie in the wide  
heath-covered moor which rises behind the <sup>village</sup> town, &  
for fully two centuries they have afforded the  
principal industry of the place. In early find-  
ings, promise enormous wealth, great veins  
of ore, which descended straight into the earth,  
appearing even upon the surface; but the lodes  
are irregular & capricious in their ramifications,  
and only to be followed at a cost which the  
yield has not been found to pay.

So hard is it <sup>for the miner</sup> to track out the tortuous courses  
of the rich veins, that, for the aid of the miners,  
the bowels of the earth are - according to local  
superstition - peopled with a race of "knockers,"  
small green folk whose business it is to  
lead their favourites, by means of mysterious  
tappings, to the spot where metal is to be found.  
These would appear to be amov friendly  
fairy-folk than the pixies of Devon; no  
mischievous pranks are recorded of  
them

them, but thrifty labours, in moorland  
cottages as well as in mine, carried on usually  
by night.

Grassington Mines lie in a wide, heath-covered  
moor which rises behind the town, to the north ~~west~~.  
They do not appear to have been worked ~~for~~ <sup>since</sup> then  
~~beginning~~ <sup>beginning</sup> the seventeenth century.

Lead is widely diffused on the ~~surrounding~~ <sup>hills</sup>,  
especially in the mill-stone of the higher hills,  
~~formation~~ <sup>fact</sup> of this district, water-wheel, &  
pewee chimney break the level sky-line  
on many of the hills, & steep mountain paths  
mark the daily track of the miners who  
dwell in the villages below. A curious  
evidence of the antiquity of some of these  
mines is found in the fact that the Norman  
Churches & chapels in the valley are all  
roofed with lead, - too costly a covering for these  
rust structures had not the metal been plentiful  
& near at hand.

Grassington lies some 200 feet above the  
sea level, on the slope which rises from the  
left-bank of the river, ~~immediately above the~~  
~~gharaballs~~. At this point, the wide open  
dale has none of the depressing character of  
a valley: the hills do not crowd round it,  
nor overshadow, nor enclose it. They simply  
form the crest of the gradual slope, <sup>upward</sup>  
from the bed of the river, ~~do not shut out~~  
~~nor shut in~~ a



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a ~~single air of heaven~~. Upon climbing the fells  
in either direction, you perceive that Wharfedale is  
but a lovely green, shallow dip in the wide  
moorlands; you find yourself in the  
very heart of the central axis of elevation.  
Consequently the air is peculiarly bracing,  
reminding one of the keen delight of breathing  
at the Hallstead.

To return to the Ghaistrills: here, as at Bolton,  
there is a Strid, a name which is <sup>variously</sup> explained  
to mean, a striding place, or a place of  
strife - the endless struggle & turmoil  
of waters. Higher up, the river is a fairly  
broad & rapid stream, but here, it snakes  
its way between sheets of grey rock through  
an opening that a man may stride across.  
Between these rocks the river hurries,  
eddies, & boils, in black & white foam  
does not curl over it, for in one hole, which is  
called The Parlour, the depth is not less than  
eighteen feet. Again the stream widens,  
but there are masses of green rock strewn  
in the channel over which the water breaks,  
Some of them, long & flat - like grave stones, <sup>long</sup>  
upright; & possibly it is to these that the  
name owes its weird name. Not that they  
resemble ghosts in figure - doubtless  
every accredited ghost has a more or less  
human form - but it is the colour, the ghastly  
grey-white of death itself, enhanced by the sallow  
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trappings laid on by the heavy-fingered moos!  
 Visit the spot by daylight, & you may remark the  
 name-fanciful, but go there in the moonshine  
 & the weird unearthly plannings of the scene  
 take possession of you; you are ready  
 to believe that the spot is haunted, though  
 no lingering tradition accounts for its  
~~unhappy~~ <sup>unhappy</sup> name. Given, the ghost, you are content  
 to leave to ~~Doctor~~ <sup>Whitaker</sup> the choice between  
 "ghost-stills" - rills, & "foast-thrills, the narrow  
 penning of the ghost." But alas for any  
 boy that savours of the supernatural &  
 romantic! Dr Dixon, a local antiquary,  
 contends for "Gay stills," i.e. 'Gay' or good  
 stiles or 'striddles' - pronounced trippingly  
 'Stills'. Then follows a slight sneer  
 at the expense of the learned historian of  
 Craven, which receives point from the fact  
 that, "in our dialect a 'ghost' is not a 'ghaist'  
 but a 'foast'."

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Half a mile lower down is the stone bridge of  
 five arches which forms part of the Skipton  
 Road. At this point, & beyond it - the river again  
 spreads abroad, clear & beautiful, with a <sup>brisk</sup> ~~strong~~  
 current - & a delightful murmuring sound.  
 It has so little depth, however, that anglers  
 may be seen standing knee-deep, almost  
 in mid-stream. That is to say, it is shallow  
 in dry weather, but the Wharfe is 'in flood'  
 upon little provocation & this is a region of  
 much rain. The <sup>hills</sup> ~~hills~~ lift their heads amongst  
 the low-sailing clouds heavy with moisture  
 from the western seas: contact with the  
 cold hill-tops causes the clouds to drop  
 in frequent, & often very violent rains.  
 Then, every swollen brook, hastening down  
 a rapid slope, pours its floods into the already  
 over-full Wharfe. Which, in the time, assumes  
 the dimensions of a great river, impetuous  
 & full as the Rhine at Bâle, & as fascinating  
 to the looker-on in its eager flow. These  
 floods are often seasons of havoc, marked by the  
 destruction of sheep & even of cattle by the overthrow  
 of the bridges. Perhaps the greatest inundation  
 on record is that of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1673, which  
 "overthrew Kettlewell Bridge, Burnley Bridge, Earsby  
 Bridge, & Bolton Bridge, Skelley Bridge & Otley Bridge, &  
 the greatest part of the water-mills." (Otley Parish Register).  
 Indeed, Grassington Bridge seems to have proved itself  
 the strongest in the valley.  
 Persons not accustomed to consider the astonishing  
 power of running water, rushing down a steep declivity, will  
 not



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with some surprise the becks of this district, of  
mere dribblets of water at the bottoms of deep rock  
gullies. Have they followed the courses of existing  
ravines, or is it possible that these insignificant  
streams have scooped out for themselves such  
disproportionate channels? We saw the other day  
the bed of a beck, which enters the Wharfe below  
Linton, a few days after it had been flooded  
by violent rains. Where wellwood, a road near  
the moors leading to the Grassington lead mines,  
crossed the stream, which was hardly discernible  
at the bottom of a fill, perhaps sixty feet in depth.  
Three days before, the beck had filled this channel  
& spread far beyond its banks. The road, which  
acted as a dam, had been partly torn down, &  
a wide spread, thick stratum, newly laid, of  
stones, & sand, testified to the power of what was  
now a thread of water as a denuding & carrying  
agent. That it should have had force to  
scoop out, in process of time, this deep gully  
was no longer matter of surprise when we saw  
the immense quantity of earthy matter which  
had been torn down & carried along by this  
turbulent beck in a single flood.

It occurred to us that the great conical  
hills which <sup>rise</sup> round the base of the long fell  
to the south east of Grassington might also  
be an effect of water denudation. They  
would be considered high hills in a less  
mountainous ~~country~~ district. They are  
covered with vividly green, rich grass & are  
adorned with wild thyme. From their curious  
roofs